

# Ultra-compact house of future proves big things come in small packages

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WEDGED between an old terrace and an industrial building in Surry Hills is a construction site so skinny the neighbours are barely aware it is there and the drilling crew drove straight past it.

But the building on Belmore Lane could play a big part in de-

termining Sydney's urban future. Being built on a tiny piece of land barely big enough to park a two cars is the city's first ultra-compact house: a five-storey structure on a six-metre by seven-metre rectangle that could provide an answer to the challenges posed by the raising cost of land and the need for urban consolidation.

There are no separate rooms, corridors or doors – but rather sliding walls that can be moved into and out of position and an internal staircase that enables light to pass through each floor.

"Perhaps this is where Sydney needs to go," the architect and future resident of the house, Domenic Alvaro, said.

"As this city becomes less af-

fordable to live in and more crowded, we have to start thinking about better ways of using space that allow people to have a reasonable quality of life and still have something to live in."

Despite the tiny size of the parcel of land, the house has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, living, kitchen, and dining areas – far more than the av-

erage apartment with an equivalent construction envelope.

Inspired by architects in Tokyo who have spent decades trying to work with incredible space and time restrictions, the house is built from prefabricated concrete that can be moulded offsite and assembled onsite in four days.

The stairs are bolted onto the

walls and the floor on each level is cut away on one side, creating a source of natural light. This also functions as a vent as the hotter upper floor sucks cooler air through the house.

"People just couldn't grasp that we were putting a five-level building on two car spots," the builder, Nicholas Bettar, from Baseline Constructions, said.

"Architects and real estate agents from around Sydney have been quietly strolling by to see what's happening. It's a real estate agent's dream because there are a whole lot of derelict sheds or unused backyards and courtyards in the inner city that could be turned into compact homes. Perhaps in a few decades we'll all be living like this."



**Tiny plot ... five-storey home.**

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